

CURRENT TOPICS

THE RATIFICATION BY THE SENATE OF the Alaskan boundary treaty does not necessarily mean that the dispute has been submitted to arbitration. On the contrary, the representatives of the administration have taken pains to say that "arbitration" is not intended by this treaty. The treaty provides for a joint commission to be composed of three men chosen by the United States and three by Great Britain. The issues are to be submitted to this commission and unless at least one member representing the United States or one member representing Great Britain shall yield the claims made by his government, then no result will be obtained. Because there is no seventh member empowered to cast the deciding vote, and perhaps on the theory that the three members representing the United States will not yield, the representatives of the administration claim that they are correct in their contention that the question affecting the Alaskan boundary has not been submitted to arbitration. If it be well understood in the beginning that, irrespective of the showing to be made before the commission, neither side to the controversy will yield then it is fair to say that the treaty does not provide for arbitration. And yet if one of the representatives for Great Britain should, in the presence of the showing made on behalf of the United States, yield the claims made by his government, the dispute would undoubtedly be disposed of.

AT THIS TIME THE ALASKAN BOUNDARY is practically defined by the agreement made between Secretary Hay and Lord Pauncefoot, October 20, 1899. That agreement is known as the modus vivendi and it will be remembered that during the presidential campaign of 1900 it was frequently referred to. The modus vivendi involved at least a temporary surrender of territory that had all along been claimed and conceded to the United States. The purport of that agreement was well described by the New York Sun in its issue of August 6, 1900. The Sun at that time entered vigorous protest against the modus vivendi and said that it yielded the boundary line that "has remained just where it is on all government maps of our possession ever since Alaska became a territory of the United States in 1867." According to the Sun, prior to 1867 the line had remained where it was prior to the modus vivendi and remained undisturbed for forty-two years on British maps marking the limits of Russian possessions in North America; and precisely the same boundary line appears on British maps including even so recent an atlas as that which the London Times published in 1897.

THE AGREEMENT ENTERED INTO BETWEEN Secretary Hay and Lord Pauncefoot was bitterly condemned by this New York paper. The Sun said: "We confess our utter inability to understand the curious plea put forth by the state department that, while the United States surrendered not a single inch of territory by this provisional line, Great Britain surrenders nineteen-twentieths of the land in dispute, and that the modus vivendi is, accordingly, another diplomatic victory for Secretary Hay. It is very much as if Great Britain, in behalf of Canada, should suddenly demand a readjustment of the Maine boundary on the northeast, claiming all of New England and part of New York up to the line of the Hudson river and Lake Champlain; and if Mr. Hay should agree to a provisional boundary line at the Penobscot river and along its east branch to the Schoodic lakes, and should then announce his readiness to receive congratulations on having induced Great Britain to surrender nineteen-twentieths of the land in dispute, at the same time removing the source of irritation in the relations of the two countries. That master stroke of diplomacy would be likely to receive close attention in the United States senate."

IN THE DISCUSSION OF THIS QUESTION BEFORE the commission appointed by the Alaskan boundary treaty, the modus vivendi cannot properly be accepted in evidence. Great injustice will be done the United States if the dispute be settled along the line of the agreement of October 20, 1899. The boundary line as claimed by the United States is the boundary line as it was

described in the treaty in which Russia ceded Alaska to the United States and it is significant that the description used in that treaty is identical with the description of the boundary line agreed upon between Russia and Great Britain in the treaty made between those governments in February, 1825. As a matter of fact in the treaty in which Russia ceded Alaska it is expressly stated that the line of demarkation fixed is described in words identical with the description contained in articles 3 and 4 of the treaty between Russia and Great Britain in 1825.

GREAT BRITAIN HAS LONG COVETED A portion of this territory. In 1824 Russia was in possession. The question was then raised by the British ministry and after a series of diplomatic negotiations the dispute was settled by the treaty of 1825. In 1867 Russia ceded Alaska to the United States. Since the treaty between Russia and Great Britain in 1825 the British ministry had raised no claim to this territory and it made no protest when Russia ceded the same to the United States in 1867. Indeed the official maps of Great Britain and particularly the chart of the northwestern coast of this country as prepared by the British admiralty concedes the claim as to the Alaskan boundary made by the United States. But when gold was discovered in the Klondike, the British ministry suddenly found new interest in this boundary line. Even the New York Tribune, pro-English as it is, admits that not until the discovery of gold in the Klondike did the British ministry advance a claim to this territory. In the light of these facts, it is not at all surprising that American statesmen very generally object to any proceeding that might lead to a surrender of territory to which the United States appears to be entitled.

A SNARE DRUM THAT WAS TAKEN FROM the British at Bunker Hill was recently presented to the G. A. R. at New Bedford, Mass., by Israel Smith. This drum has been in the possession of Mr. Smith's family for many years. Its original owner was Levi Smith and the historic character of the instrument appears to be well authenticated.

THE ISLE OF PINES, TERRITORY CLAIMED by the Cubans and territory which will probably be claimed by the United States, is attracting some attention. In the famous Platt amendment in which amendment conditions were set out after compliance with which the Cubans were to be permitted to establish their own government, it was expressly stated that the question affecting the title to the Isle of Pines should be left to future adjustment by treaty. A writer in Public Opinion, referring to this territory, says that "though the Isle of Pines has been put politically beyond the limits of Cuba's constitution and is geologically dissociate, it is yet historically, and even physically, closely attached to the larger island. It is as a pendant hung from the fair throat of Cuba. There is a little band of railroad running from Havana, on the north shore, to Batabano, on the south, and then a string of almost continuous keys from Batabano to the emerald mountain of Daguilla. The appropriateness of the simile is increased by the island's resemblance at a distance to a great jewel blazing in the sun. And it is seldom out of the proud sight of the senora, for from the mountain of Pinar del Rio the Sierra de Caballos are always visible if the day be fair and the atmosphere clear."

THERE ARE 3,200 PEOPLE IN THE ISLE OF Pines, 2,500 of whom are white. According to Public Opinion, most of these people came from Spain by way of Cuba. At one time the island was known as the Isle of Pirates because it was once the rendezvous of political offenders who were sent there for banishment and for criminals in servitude. It is, however, no longer a piratical resort or penal colony, but is quite a comfortable home for those who have been born in it and a delightful hospice for those who may be traveling that way. It is pointed out that one-third of the population of the Isle of Pines live in the village of Neuva Gerona. Another third live in the village of Santa Fe, twelve miles away. The re-

maining portion of the population are scattered through the habitable parts of the island which without Cienaga (swamp) have an area of but little less than that of Rhode Island. So outside of the villages there is an average of but one person to the square mile or one family to every five square miles.

SINCE THE SPANISH WAR A NUMBER OF Americans have taken up their abode in the Isle of Pines and these are earnestly advocating its annexation to the United States. Of these people Public Opinion says: "They have already pre-empted a good portion of the forest land and productive plain and have begun the planting of oranges, bananas, and pineapples, in anticipation of the day when their lumber and fruit may be shipped without duty to our ports. They urge that it is the only tropical territory within the American system not only climatically adapted but unreservedly open to American colonization, the native population bearing so trifling a proportion to the sustaining capacity of the island, and that the moral effect of a thoroughly Anglo-Saxon colony in the midst of the West Indies would be most wholesome. But the congressional reason for putting its title in commission was its supposed strategic value. It can easily be made impregnable, and it lies not far from the Yucatan channel, and so along one of the paths to and from Panama and Nicaragua."

ONE BUILDING IN JERSEY CITY, N. J., ATTRACTS considerable attention because of the fact that it is the home of 3,000 corporations. The building is eight stories in height and of course could not accommodate all of its legal tenants if they were persons rather than corporations. A large number of these corporations are represented by a single person.

A HINT AS TO THE MYSTERIES OF THE construction of a dam is provided by Leslie's Monthly in an interesting description of a dam across the Hudson river at Glenn's Falls in this way: "To say that 150,000 barrels of cement were used in making the concrete in which the huge blocks of granite were laid, to state that 400,000 tons of this same granite were built into the wall; that 30,000 trees were cut for the wood-work; that 1,500 men labored for three years to complete this narrow barrier stretching across the river, represents only a series of ungraspable ideas. The cable ways used to transport buckets of cement and blocks of stone were the largest in the world, the biggest 2,400 feet in length. It needs 11,400 feet, or fully two miles of wire to run this gigantic aerial road. The finished dam—it will probably be completed early next spring—will be 1,400 feet long, exclusive of the 400 foot wall of the canal built to conduct the water to the turbine wheel. The greatest height will be 154 feet, with a width along the top of seventeen feet. There are one or two such constructions slightly larger in size, but none that bar so mighty and powerful a river. The power developed will be 50,000 horsepower at times."

A NOVEL CHURCH BENEFIT HAS RECENTLY been suggested by a clergyman near Williamport, Pa. According to a dispatch to the Chicago Inter-Ocean, Rev. A. E. Cooper, pastor of the Lutheran church at Maple Hill, Pa., four months ago induced the members of the aid society of the church to dedicate to the church all eggs laid on Sunday by hens owned by members of the society. The dedication covered a period from September 15 to January 15. The ingathering is to take the form of an egg social to be held on Thursday evening of next week, when the number of eggs laid on Sunday and the proceeds from the sale of the same will be announced. The Rev. Mr. Cooper recently attacked the modern church festival and social in an article printed in the Young Lutheran, and for this reason his egg dedication plan is attracting much attention.

IN SPITE OF OUR CHINESE WALL, THERE are a considerable number of Chinamen among the population of this country. A writer for Leslie's Monthly says: "It is estimated that there are about 100,000 Chinamen in the United